

Unfortunately, my friend from Texas went on to take a different view when it came to Vanita Gupta, who has been nominated to be an Associate Attorney General, the No. 3 position at the Department. Every Senator, of course, has the right to oppose any nominee, even though many of my colleagues across the aisle have spoken about the importance of deferring to President Biden and his choices to lead his Cabinet.

But when opposition turns from beyond just feeling negative toward someone to stating things about that person that may not be altogether accurate, I feel obligated to come to the floor and correct the record. I would like to address a few of the false attacks that are being leveled against Ms. Gupta.

She unequivocally stated in her testimony under oath before the Judiciary Committee last week that she opposes defunding the police. Any suggestion to the contrary is patently false. We have seen statement after statement from law enforcement organizations that support Vanita Gupta and her nomination. They admitted plainly that they know she doesn't call for defunding the police.

Yet we also continue to see statement after statement from Republican Senators and many of their allies buying television ads claiming the contrary. Ask yourself this basic question: If Vanita Gupta wants to defund the police, how would she get the support and endorsement of the Fraternal Order of Police, the International Association of Chiefs of Police, Major Cities Chiefs Association, National Sheriffs' Association, Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association, and others? I think we know the answer. She doesn't want to defund the police. It is simply something that is said about her that is not true.

But what Ms. Gupta has called for and what she reiterated before the Committee on the Judiciary last week is making sure that police officers, the men and women who put themselves in harm's way every day, are not called upon to be mental health counselors. Some may have that skill, but most are not trained in that field, and it is not why they signed up for the job.

As Ms. Gupta explained at her hearing, we have spent far too long laying too many of our Nation's social problems at the feet of police—no matter what goes wrong in the neighborhood, on the street, in the household—call 9-1-1. From homelessness to mental health issues to substance abuse disorders, they all fall on the laps of our law enforcement officials. This is something that police officers, police chiefs, county sheriffs, and civil rights advocates agree on, finding the right person can be critical in an intervention.

Ms. Gupta is a consensus builder, and the consensus from law enforcement is this: Confirm Vanita Gupta.

My friend from Texas also suggested there was something amiss in Ms.

Gupta's response to his question on whether she supported decriminalizing drugs. He asked her this at the hearing: "Is it true that you advocate decriminalization of all drugs?" Ms. Gupta, under oath, responded: "No, Senator, I do not."

My friend from Texas suggested this answer was misleading, given that Ms. Gupta wrote 9 years ago that she would support decriminalizing the possession of small amounts of drugs.

There was nothing misleading about her response. The question was posed in the present tense. It was not limited to decriminalizing possession. More importantly, as she eloquently explained at the hearing, Ms. Gupta's position on decriminalizing drug possession had changed due to her family's own experience with opioid addiction. She did something that far too few people in Washington are willing to do. She acknowledged that she had changed her mind.

I have done that, too, as an elected official. Sometimes people call me on it, and, luckily, I can turn to a good source for rebuttal. You see, Abraham Lincoln spent many years in politics, and he was once accused of changing his mind on an issue, and he replied: Yes, it is true, I changed my position on that issue, but I would rather be right some of the time than wrong all the time. That is the way I feel about being honest if you change your mind based on new information, new experience, or thinking it through from a different angle.

My friend from Texas also suggested that Ms. Gupta somehow wanted to follow her own personal convictions rather than the law. That is not true. Ms. Gupta is a Justice Department veteran. She spent 3 years leading the Civil Rights Division. She enforced the law regardless of her personal views, and she will do the same as Associate Attorney General.

Senator CORNYN suggested that Ms. Gupta harbors personal views that are hostile to police. I won't recount again all the police organizations that have endorsed her. But he omits the fact that she has already served in the Justice Department. And what was the verdict on her time in the Department? These police groups believe in her. They like her approach. They think she is fair. They have endorsed her. I hope my friends on the Republican side of the aisle will acknowledge that.

Unlike the prior administration, President Biden has nominated senior Justice Department leaders who are driven by fidelity to the rule of law. They understand their role at the Department as officials who enforce the law, and they will do so. Ms. Gupta is no exception.

Next week, we will vote on Ms. Gupta's nomination in committee. She has broad bipartisan support across the Nation—law enforcement, Justice Department officials of both parties, civil rights groups, even some of the most conservative Republican advocates,

they back Ms. Gupta. She deserves that same bipartisan support here in the Senate.

FILIBUSTER

Madam President, it was August of 1957, and a Senator took the floor here in this very Chamber. He had a remarkable record. He served as a Democratic Senator, as a Dixiecrat Senator, and as a Republican Senator before he finally retired, and he served many years.

In 1957, he was on the floor of the Senate to take his last stand. It was August, and it was a confrontation he had been preparing for, for a long time. He was a veteran in World War II, one of the few in the Chamber at that time, and he was clearly a man devoted to his country and had shown real courage in serving as an officer in World War II. But his job on that day was to speak on the floor of the Senate for a long time.

He had been preparing for it. He had taken daily steam baths trying to dehydrate his body so that he could stand on the Senate floor for a long time, even absorb fluids without needing to take a break to go the restroom. He arrived for the battle armed with throat lozenges to stave off hoarseness, and he held the floor longer than any single Senator ever has, even to this day—24 hours and 18 minutes.

For what principled purpose did this Senator take such pains and preparation? For what noble reason did he grind the world's greatest deliberative body to a full-scale halt for more than 24 hours? In order to defend Jim Crow racial discrimination and deny equality to all Americans.

Despite his efforts, the Senate would go on to pass the Civil Rights Act of 1957, the first Federal civil rights law in nearly a century since the Reconstruction. That Senator, of course, was Strom Thurmond of South Carolina. This is how he described the Civil Rights Act of 1957 during his now notorious filibuster of that historic law. He said, "I think the bill which is under consideration is unconstitutional. I think it's invalid. I think we are doing a useless thing."

Well, the truth was just the opposite. The blatant discrimination of Jim Crow laws was an affront to our Constitution, a stain on our national character, and a threat to our standing in the world. The Civil Rights Act of 1957, which Strom Thurmond filibustered, broke the death grip of Jim Crow on American democracy and led the way, a few years later, to even more sweeping equality laws, including the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Today, nearly 65 years after Strom Thurmond's marathon defense of Jim Crow, the filibuster is still making a mockery of American democracy. The filibuster is still being misused by some Senators to block legislation urgently needed and supported by a strong majority of the American people.

There is one major difference, however, when it comes to filibusters from

the days of Strom Thurmond and his long-winded defense of segregation. Strom Thurmond had to sacrifice personally his comfort for his misguided beliefs. He had to actually speak without sitting on the floor for more than 24 hours to maintain his filibuster. In his day, if you sat down to take a rest or left the floor, the filibuster was over. Today, it is not the same. Senators can literally phone in a filibuster. All a Senator has to do is to tell the staff working in the cloakroom what their intention is as to a filibuster, and then the message is delivered to the floor, and another bill is sent to the Senate's overflowing legislative graveyard. This is what hitting legislative rock bottom looks like.

Today's filibuster has turned the world's most deliberative body into one of the world's most ineffectual bodies. We are like the giant in "Gulliver's Travels," tied down by our own legislative redtape, unable to respond to crises and the clear wishes of the American people.

Defenders of the filibuster will tell you that it is essential for American democracy. The opposite is true. Today's filibuster undermines democracy.

By eroding people's faith in the ability of democracy to solve problems that matter the most, misuse of the filibuster may accidentally open the door to autocrats, would-be dictators, who falsely promise to deliver results, even if they ignore all of democracy's rules.

To my friends who count themselves as proud members and supporters of the Federalist Society—I am sure you have heard of it—go back and read the Federalist Papers. Read what the Founders thought of the filibusters. They hated the idea. Alexander Hamilton and James Madison, both, penned passionate defenses of simple majority rule. Listen to what Alexander Hamilton had to say about the supermajority rule: "What at first sight may seem a remedy is, in reality, a poison." Those are Hamilton's own words. If a majority could not govern, Hamilton warned, it would lead to "tedious delays; continual negotiation and intrigue; [and] contemptible compromises of the public good." "Tedious delays; continual negotiations and intrigue"—sound familiar?

And then there is James Madison, the father of the U.S. Constitution, in Federalist 58. He wrote that if a supermajority were required to pass all new laws "the fundamental principle of free government would be reversed. It would be no longer the majority that would rule; the power would be transferred to the minority."

Hamilton, Madison, and other of our Founding Fathers debated and rejected the idea of supermajority rule. They protected minority rights by creating a government with a President, two legislative Chambers, and a judiciary in which minority views were respected and making a law, even with simple majorities, was a challenge.

Rather than protecting the finely balanced system our Founders created,

today's filibuster throws the system out of balance, giving one-half of one branch of government what amounts to veto over the rest of government. It promotes gridlock, not good governance.

As I said, Senators don't have to stand for even 1 minute to shut down the Senate. All they have to do is to threaten it, phone it in, catch a plane, go home from Washington, and come back Monday to see how their filibuster is doing. "Mr. SMITH Phones It In," that wouldn't have been much of a movie, would it?

Defenders of today's filibuster offer a second defense of the tradition. They say the filibuster promotes bipartisan cooperation and debate. Well, just look around. Can anyone really claim that we are living in the great age of Senate debate? Last year, calendar year 2020, in the entire year, 12 months, we considered 29 amendments on the floor of the Senate—29. It is quite an improvement over the previous year, a 30-percent improvement. The previous year we considered 22 amendments on the floor of the Senate. I am not counting the vote-aroma spectacles. That is not much of a debate. It is not much of an amendment process. Sixty seconds a side, that is a great debate? Not by my definition.

The truth is, as filibusters and threatened filibusters have increased in recent decades, real debate and bipartisan cooperation have plummeted. Today's filibuster is often used to prevent the Senate from even starting to debate important ideas. It is not the guarantor of democracy; it has become the death grip of democracy.

Senator Thurmond's 1957 filibuster marked only the fifth time since 1917 that the Senate had voted to cut off any measure. I want you to reflect on that for a minute. We had had five filibusters in five decades when he took the floor in August of 1957. Guess what. We can have five filibusters in 5 days now; they have become so common.

So how did the filibuster become a weapon of mass obstruction? The answer is, we stumbled into it. The filibuster was a mistake to begin with, and it has gotten worse over time. As many of our colleagues know, when Congress first met in 1789, the House and the Senate rule books were nearly identical. Both rule books allowed a simple majority to cut off debate on any proposal by invoking what was known as the previous question rule. The House still has that motion.

The Senate eliminated the previous question rule by mistake in 1805. The change came at the suggestion of Vice President Aaron Burr, who was fresh off of his trial for killing Alexander Hamilton, and who was later tried for treason. Burr, presiding over the Senate one day, skimmed the rule book and suggested the previous question rule be dropped. He reasoned, we hardly ever use that rule, so why is it necessary? Thus, the filibuster was born, not as a sacred constitutional principle but an offhanded clerical suggestion.

There were few filibusters before the Civil War. After the war, filibusters remained rare, used exclusively to deny African Americans their basic constitutional rights. The first major changes started in 1917. The Senate adopted what is known as rule XXII—the cloture rule—allowing the Senate to end debate with two-thirds majority vote.

Fast-forward to the 1970s, two more changes in the filibuster. First, Senators changed the rule to allow more than one bill or matter to be pending on the Senate floor at a time. Before this, a filibuster really literally brought the Senate to a halt. The creation of this two-track system allowed the Senate to take up other matters while the filibuster continued, at least theoretically.

In 1975, the rules were changed again, requiring just a three-fifths majority, 60 votes—not 67 but 60 votes—to end a filibuster. Suddenly, the filibuster became relatively painless, for Senators at least, and the number of filibusters exploded.

From 1917 to 1970, the Senate took 49 votes to break filibusters—49 votes in that period of 53 years. That is fewer than one a year. Since 2010, it has taken the Senate on average more than 80 votes a year to end filibusters.

Filibusters on so-called motions to proceed now regularly prevent us from even discussing proposals supported by the strong majority of American people. The modern filibuster had broken the normal legislative process. It was never an essential or even intentional part of democracy, and now it rules the Senate.

Over my last 20 years, I have faced a 60-vote requirement to move a measure which is very important to me and to hundreds of thousands of people in our country. It is known as the Dream Act, the bipartisan Dream Act. It was introduced so we could give to young people who were brought to this country as infants, toddlers, and little kids by their families a chance to earn their way to a path of legalization and citizenship.

Five times since it was first introduced, the Dream Act has been stopped by a filibuster—twice in 2007, once in 2010, twice in 2018. In each instance, the Dream Act received a bipartisan majority vote but was blocked by a minority of Senators. Their opposition prevented the Senate from even debating the measure.

It was repeated rejections to the Dream Act by a minority of Senators that finally moved President Obama to establish the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, DACA.

To our Republican colleagues, let me say this: If you don't want to see this President or any President impose solutions based on Executive orders, shouldn't we be willing to debate the issues at hand and consider actually legislating?

I have long been open to changing the Senate rules to restore the standing filibuster. If a Senator insists on

blocking the will of the Senate, he should at least pay the minimal price of being present, no more phoning it in. If your principles are that important, stand up for them, speak your mind, hold the floor, and show your resolve.

Others have proposed different reforms, including reducing the number of votes needed to invoke cloture, creating a tiered system of voting in which a filibuster could be broken with successively smaller majorities and, ultimately, a simple majority. Some have suggested that we forbid filibusters of bills that pass out of the committee with bipartisan support. I support discussing any proposal that ends the misuse of a filibuster as a weapon of mass obstruction.

If the Senate retains the filibuster, we must change the rules so that any Senator who wants to bring the government to a standstill endures at least some discomfort in the process. We need new rules that actually promote debate. They are long overdue.

I will close with one thought. My first job in the Senate was as a college intern for Illinois Senator Paul Douglas. Paul Douglas was an extraordinary man: Ph.D. in economics, war hero, champion of honest government, and a passionate supporter of civil rights.

In 1957, he was actually on the floor when Strom Thurmond was giving his historic filibuster. In a bit of ingenuity, Paul Douglas asked that a pitcher of orange juice be placed on the desk next to Strom Thurmond's desk. He hoped that thirst and the call of nature might force an end to the shameful filibuster. Well, it didn't work. Likewise, it will take more than orange juice these days to bring an end to the filibuster as a weapon of mass obstruction.

It is time to change the Senate rules. Stop holding the Senate hostage. We cannot allow misuse of arcane rules to block the will of the American people. I urge my colleagues to defend democracy by making the changes needed.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The junior Senator from Alabama.

FOR THE PEOPLE ACT OF 2021

Mr. TUBERVILLE. Madam President, I rise today to discuss a piece of legislation we may soon consider in this body called H.R. 1.

H.R. 1 does not solve the problems currently facing our election system; it makes the problems worse. Democrats have labeled the bill the "For the People Act," but it really should be called "For the Democrats Act."

This partisan bill represents the largest Federal power grab in decades, and that is saying a lot after Democrats rammed through a partisan \$1.9 trillion stimulus bill just 2 weeks ago. The American people elected 50 Republican Senators, but the Democrats are happy to cut out half the Chamber and the millions of Americans we represent to get what they want.

H.R. 1 would completely rewrite our election laws, hijacking power from

the States and giving it to the Federal Government to dictate how our elections are run. This type of top-down approach is the opposite of our founding principles of self-government.

Article I, section 4 of the Constitution grants States the authority to manage their Federal election processes; H.R. 1 would take that away. The changes to our free and Federal elections that H.R. 1 proposes should concern every single American. This bill forces a one-size-fits-all election system on our country by federally mandating how States run their elections. This phrase "for the people" means allowing citizens to choose their own leaders and voting processes, not Washington dictating new rules of the game.

Let's look at a few examples. H.R. 1 would prohibit States from requiring voters to show identification, photo ID, or otherwise. Currently, 36 States have requirements where voters need to show ID to vote. Nearly 75 percent of States agree that that is a good idea to confirm you are who you say you are when you go to exercise one of the most important civic duties.

But the point is, States get to decide. They get to decide the laws on their books when it comes to managing their Federal election processes. H.R. 1 would nix the law in those 36 States.

H.R. 1 would also make same-day voter registration mandatory in all 50 States. There are obvious concerns with same-day registration and its potential to be abused. This concept isn't new.

Many States have already had the opportunity to consider it and adopt it or not if they choose. But if H.R. 1 is enacted, it would overrule the laws and choices of 29 States that have already decided they don't want such a risky provision in their voting process.

Additionally, the Democrats are using this bill to make all the worst practices of pandemic-era elections mandatory in all 50 States: universal mail-in ballots, ballot harvesting, and the drop boxes, just to name a few.

There may not be much we agree upon up here on Capitol Hill sometimes, but I think we all agree that the 2020 Federal elections voting process was a complete disaster in some States.

Many of the States that had the hardest time running their elections were the ones that adopted the same provisions in this bill. Normally, you seek to use best practices, but this bill adopts the worst practices and forces every State to use them. That is the opposite of how our "labs of democracy," our 50 States, should work.

Every State is different, with different populations, histories, challenges, opportunities. What works for Alabama may not work for California or Oklahoma and vice versa.

State governments know the needs of their people and communities better than bureaucrats here in Washington, DC. They have different laws, and they have different rules and regulations, including when it comes to voting.

The same goes for the counties within each State. Jefferson County, the most populous county in Alabama, is different from Greene County, the least populous.

While the State sets broad parameters, county governments are given some flexibility to run elections in the way that is accountable and responsive to their people. H.R. 1 fails to recognize the difference in our States and counties.

This bill is not for the people. It is not of the people or by the people. Americans want faith and trust in their elections. They want to feel confident that the process works. H.R. 1 injects distrust into the process, and that is not what Americans want or need.

In H.R. 1, we have a bill that will make States' voting procedures more susceptible to fraud. There is more we could go into, but I would say these provisions should be more than enough to sink this piece of legislation.

It shouldn't be controversial to say that we should have robust protections against voter fraud. Some States certainly do a better job protecting against fraud than others, but, ultimately, that is up to the State to decide, not the Federal Government.

The Democrats' repeated response is that election fraud doesn't exist, but they only say this when it benefits them. They want to rewrite the rules of the game for all 50 States from Capitol Hill.

I have been consistent on the question of voter fraud. I believe we need more integrity in our elections, not less. We as a country need to restore confidence in our electoral process. I have joined my colleagues in calling for a bipartisan commission to look into how we can make our elections more secure. But to completely throw away or outlaw many of the safeguards we have would destroy that remaining confidence for generations to come. But maybe that is the point of H.R. 1, which is even more reason to oppose this bad bill.

House Democrats are calling this bill the most important voting legislation since the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The Voting Rights Act was important, historic, and necessary. H.R. 1 is not. The Voting Rights Act guaranteed millions of Americans the rights granted by our Constitution that were wrongfully denied to them for too long. It was also passed with strong bipartisan majorities in both Chambers of Congress, despite Democrats' control of the Presidency, the House, and the Senate. That bipartisan support showed the American people that folks from different backgrounds can come together to work out important issues.

Any reform to the rules of the game must be bipartisan, just like they were with the Voting Rights Act. For one party to completely rewrite the rules will destroy the people's trust in our voting process and their trust in democracy.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Iowa.

INFORMATION SHARING

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, today, I am going to discuss a very important issue that I started to investigate during the last Congress, and it is an issue that the executive branch must continue to improve upon. The subject is information sharing between the intelligence community and the Department of Health and Human Services. The connection between those two entities is a critical information sharing data point, and it must last beyond the current pandemic.

To state the obvious, the healthcare landscape has evolved considerably in the past several decades. More specifically, the healthcare landscape has changed considerably in just the last year because of the COVID pandemic. Threats to healthcare now include cyber, intelligence, and counterintelligence threats.

For example, we know the Chinese Government engaged in cyber attacks to steal American COVID-related research. The Communist Chinese Government will stop at nothing to steal our hard-earned work product. They know, as does the world, that the best of the best is still right here in America.

Last Congress, as chairman of the Finance Committee, I focused a good deal of my oversight efforts on the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of National Security. For example, in June of 2019, I held a hearing on foreign threats to taxpayer-funded research, where the Office of National Security was one of the government witnesses. After the hearing, I then held a classified committee briefing with all the government witnesses to further discuss the foreign threats that we face.

That office is the Department's connection, then, to the intelligence community and, accordingly, it plays a critical role in the Department of HHS's overall mission. That mission includes pandemic response and countering national security threats.

To fully perform its function, HHS needs access to intelligence community products and databases. So with that access, they would have information that is vital to mitigating threats to the Department, its funded partners, and its interagency colleagues. So, as part of my oversight efforts and before the pandemic even started, I worked to get that process done.

I noted my concerns to the Trump administration that the Office of National Security hadn't been adequately incorporated into the intelligence community. To their credit, the Trump administration rightly and quickly resolved many of these issues. The Trump administration created links and information sharing between the intelligence community and the Department of Health and Human Services where that cooperation hadn't existed before.

Those links should have existed many years ago, but prior administrations, like the Obama-Biden administration, failed to see around the corner and get the job done. Just as an example, even with the swine flu and outbreaks across the globe, the Obama-Biden administration failed to plug the Department of Health and Human Services into the intelligence community the way that it should have been done. The current pandemic exemplifies the need to have a robust intelligence operation that includes the Department of Health and Human Services.

As pathogenic threats to our homeland and our people increase and become more complex, the Federal Government must prepare well in advance for a very quick response. In order to accomplish that task, the government must focus on the seamless communication that must exist between and among the various Departments and Agencies. The Federal Government must take a whole-of-government approach.

One serious barrier to that seamless communication is overclassification. That is a serious barrier we find too much in government. But, particularly when it deals with the pandemic, it becomes a problem that can cost a lot of lives.

In January of 2020 when reports began to circulate about COVID, I instructed my oversight and investigative staff to get a classified briefing from the Office of National Security. After that briefing, I made clear in a public way that overclassification during a public health emergency could have deadly consequences.

If a certain intelligence work product is classified in a certain way, sometimes other government Agencies won't then have access. The Federal Government must guard against this type of overclassification, and that is especially important during emergency situations that demand quick action.

To the extent that disagreements exist between Agencies, which they often do in complex and ever-changing fact patterns, discussion must be had between and among the government. From that, the facts will bear out, and the best decisions can then be made. That process can't take place if the government puts information in silos that Federal health Agencies are unable to access.

Overclassification is more of a problem when China's Government refuses to share relevant data with researchers. At least this government—the United States Government—can and should share information between and among its Agencies.

This administration must advance and improve upon the cooperative gains created by the Trump administration and make sure that the left hand continues to communicate with the right hand. The last thing that we should do is to revert to the lack of cooperation that existed before, espe-

cially in light of the current pandemic and the lessons that have been learned from this pandemic.

The cooperation between Federal health Agencies and the intelligence community will strengthen ties between them for decades to come, and the American people will be better served by the increased communication. Simply put, increased communication will save lives.

SUNSHINE WEEK

Now, Madam President, on another point, our democracy was built, as we all know, for the people, by the people, and, hence, is accountable to the people. The best way to be accountable is through transparency. So I come to the floor today, like I have a lot of years at this time of the year, to celebrate an important week that we celebrate then, regularly, and it is known as Sunshine Week.

During this week, we celebrate the birth of the fourth President of the United States, James Madison. Madison, as we all know, was the father of the Constitution, and maybe we don't know so much about him, but he also happens to be a father of the Constitution that believed in open government. He believed that access to information and meaningful oversight and accountability are foundational to the American system of government. In other words, the public's business ought to be public.

This year, I am continuing the Madison legacy by introducing several pieces of legislation. I am also asking the Government Accountability Office to look into how the Freedom of Information Act, or FOIA as we call it, has been impacted by the pandemic.

First, on the judicial side of things, I am again advocating for cameras in the courts. In the last year, nearly every major institution, from schools to Congress, have adapted to the pandemic by being virtual. So I believe bringing cameras into the Federal courtrooms would also bring in the public and open up access to our third branch of government.

At the same time, I am also asking the courts to provide transparency into our civil justice system by requiring the disclosure of all parties in a case. Litigation funders, such as hedge funds, are providing money to plaintiffs to bring lawsuits. This is all done in secret.

For many reasons, everyone involved in the case, including the judge and including the defendant, should know that these parties funding these lawsuits exist—in other words, who they are. They are big players, or maybe you wouldn't have those cases.

On the executive side, one of the most important tools the public has to hold its government accountable is the Freedom of Information Act, FOIA. Before its passage, people had to justify their need for information to the government.

Can you believe there was a time when, for the public's business, which